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ERS NEWSLETTER

A Bimonthly Newsletter for Economic Research Service Employees and Colleagues

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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ERS Speakers Featured at Outlook Conference



ERS played a major role in USDA's annual Agricultural Outlook Conference held in Washington, D.C., November 28-30. This is the largest agricultural outlook conference held in the United States.

Over the years, the outlook conference has become a major forum for agriculture, bringing together noted speakers from government and the private sector to debate prospects for U.S. and world agriculture, farmers, agribusiness, and consumers.

The conference focused on agricultural prospects for 1990 and beyond and pending policy decisions that will help to shape the course of agriculture.

Distinguished speakers discussed trade negotiations, farm legislation, rural development initiatives, and regulatory actions affecting consumers, farmers, and the environment.

ERS staff presenting commodity outlooks included Kevin Bost, Katharine Buckley, Peter Buzzanell, Lee Christensen, Verner Grise, Shannon Hamm, David Harvey, Larry Van Meir, James Miller, Stephen Reed, James Schaub, and Robert Skinner. Other ERS presenters included Carolyn Rogers on family economics, Ralph Parlett on the outlook for food prices, Stan Daberkow on the outlook for agricultural inputs, Gregory Hanson on the farm finance outlook, and Katherine Reichelderfer on implications of water quality legislation for agriculture. Robert

ERS Prepares For 1990 Farm Bill Debate

Commodity Background Papers Published

As a part of the effort to fulfill ERS's mission of informing the policymakers and the public of the economic consequences of public policies, ERS is preparing 19 commodity background papers for the upcoming farm bill debate. Each report discusses the structure of the industry, its role in international markets, the history of Government programs, the effects of the programs on producers, consumers, and taxpayers, and issues that will be faced in the upcoming farm bill debate. Staff reports have been published for wheat, rice, corn, sorghum, barley, oats, soybeans, peanuts, cotton, wool and mohair, tobacco, and honey. Others for sugar, dairy, pork, beef, poultry, aquaculture, and fruits and vegetables are in preparation.

The January-March 1990 issue of the *National Food Review* also focuses on Federal programs that provide support for agriculture. The articles—covering all program commodities—discuss the history of the programs, current provisions, and their effects on producers, processors, and consumers.

Barry and Robert Bohall were session moderators. Anthony Grano was the ERS representative on the program committee, and John Lee served on the conference steering committee.

Conference proceedings and an outlook chartbook will be available for sale in early March. For further details, call 1-800-999-6779.

USDA Farm Bill Task Force

ERS analysts are participating in 15 committees organized to develop inputs for USDA's farm bill proposals. The committees are part of USDA's Farm Bill Task Force, chaired by undersecretary Richard Crowder, who developed the committee structure. Overall coordination is provided by Vern Neppl (Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service), Philip Mackie (Foreign Agricultural Service), Scott Steele (Office of Budget and Program Analysis), and Patrick O'Brien (ERS).

ERS committee assignments are Conservation—David Ervin, Cotton—Scott Sanford, Dairy—James Miller, Feed grains—William Lin, Flexibility—Sam Evans, Grain Reserves—Paul Westcott, Honey—Frederic Hoff, Livestock—Terry Crawford, Peanuts and Soybeans—James Schaub, Sugar—Robert Barry, Tobacco—Verner Grise, Wheat and Rice—Edwin Young, and Wool and Mohair—Edward Glade. Other committee members represent FAS, ASCS, Economic Analysis Staff, and OBPA.

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Partial Reorganization of ARED

ERS's Agriculture and Rural Economy Division abolished its Rural Business and Government Branch, merging the branch's two sections into other branches. The Rural Business and Government Branch's Rural Business and Industry Section and the Rural Labor Markets Section in the Human Resources Branch were consolidated into the Rural Employment Section in the renamed Human Resources and Industry Branch. The Government and Development Policy Section retains its name and functions after its transfer into the Finance and Tax Branch, which was renamed the Finance and Development Policy Branch.

ARED took these steps both to facilitate research in the two areas and to realize savings necessitated by funding constraints. The Rural Business and Industry Section and the Rural Labor Markets Section had both been studying rural employment. The Rural Business and Industry Section had concentrated on the effects of changing industrial structure and the sectoral mix of rural industry on employment trends. The Rural Labor Markets Section had examined the topic from the perspective of the workforce and had been moving toward research on the development of human capital.

A strong relationship also existed between the work performed by the Government and Development Policy Section and the Rural Finance and Tax Section of the Finance and Tax Branch. The Government and Development Policy Section analyzes the financing of services provided by rural local governments, while the Rural Finance and Tax Section assesses the availability of capital for rural development.

USDA GATT Submission Task Force

ERS analysts played a crucial role in drafting the comprehensive U.S. proposal for agricultural trade reform presented at the Uruguay

Round of multilateral trade negotiations held in Geneva, Switzerland, last October. The negotiations are taking place under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Suzanne Early (Office of the U.S. Trade Representative) and Joseph O'Mara (Foreign Agricultural Service) provided overall coordination of the task force.

Current Research

Technology Series Initiated

The technology program in ERS seeks to improve understanding of the economic aspects of technology and its relationship to agriculture, resource use, the economy, and society. The program is centered in the Resources and Technology Division but draws on expertise from and encourages research across ERS. John Reilly (786-1448) coordinates ERS's technology research.

Among the significant new activities is a series of Agriculture Information Bulletins on technology, agriculture, and resources initiated to highlight technology research of current interest.

The first AIB in the series, *International Technology Transfer* (AIB-517) by ERS economist Margot Anderson, examined the economic implications of technology transfer among countries for both the technology exporting and importing country and provided data on international patent activity.

In the second bulletin in the series, ERS researchers Donald Negri and John Hanchar examined the prospects for adoption of water-conserving irrigation technologies in *Water Conservation through Irrigation Technology* (AIB-576).

In the third AIB in the series, John Reilly examined trends in biotechnology development and potential effects on consumers in *Consumer Effects of Biotechnology* (AIB-581).

Fourth in the series, *How Technological Progress and*

ERS subgroup representatives included Larry Deaton—Import Access, Mathew Shane—Internal Support, Jerry Sharples and Mark Smith—Export Subsidies and Export Controls, and Barbara Chatten (on detail to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative) cochairperson of the subgroups. Milton Erickson served on the interagency coordination group.

Government Programs Influence Agricultural Land Values (AIB-582), by Robbin Shoemaker, notes that government acreage reduction programs have counteracted some of the effects of technological change and placed upward pressure on farmland values.

The future bulletins will deal with issues ranging from agricultural research and development expenditures to economic implications of animal growth hormones.

Consumer Demand for Food Studied

ERS has a significant program of research on the consumer demand for food. The program, centered in the Commodity Economics Division's Food Demand Research Section and led by ERS economist Richard Haidacher (786-1863), focuses on developing

See **CONSUMER DEMAND**, p. 4

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Administrator's Letter—ERS in the 1990's

ERS changed significantly over the 1980's, for many reasons: changes in the leadership and the perceived mission of USDA, budget pressures (which forced constant reexamination of priorities and means of achieving greater efficiencies), a fundamental change in the status of U.S. and global agriculture, the rising political visibility of a set of nontraditional issues and concerns, and, not least important, a changing mix of people in ERS with different backgrounds, experiences, and training.



The 1970's started with a bang (the Soviet grain purchases and world food shortages) that shaped expectations for the rest of that decade. The 1980's started with a collapse of global agricultural markets and with global recession. The convergence of events that brought about such a major shift in economic circumstances and expectations and the ensuing fallout from those major shifts colored the rest of the decade.

What big events will bring a uniqueness to the 1990's? Some predict a more stable or normal decade characterized by neither boom nor bust (the predictions preceding the 1970's and the 1980's turned out to be neither accurate nor useful). Perhaps we have not yet grasped the scope and significance of the dramatic events in Eastern Europe and the chain of reactions to those events that may emerge over the next several years. Those changes could affect the entire global geopolitical balance, reshape world markets, and alter the policy and spending priorities of nations. If so, those developments could shape the fortunes and priorities in agriculture worldwide and here at home.

What will all of this mean for ERS? Change, of course. We welcome the challenge. The history of ERS is one of responding to the changing needs of the times.

As we begin the 1990-92 planning cycle, I sense a strong feeling among the ERS staff and in the Department that ERS cannot coast on its reputation. Urgent research agendas need to be undertaken. I don't expect ERS to shrink any further, but I also don't expect major new funding to deal with the new issues of the 1990's. We will address those new issues by shifting resources away from priorities of the 1980's. Those shifts will require adjustments by both ERS leadership and individual staff members.

USDA has a hierarchy of senior officials, including the Secretary, who understand the importance of good economic information. They expect good economic information from us, and we must provide it if we are to retain the Department's respect and support. Other agencies within and outside USDA have their own views about what ERS can do for them. The same is true for the myriad other groups who view themselves as our constituents, from members of Congress to farmers, consumers, and taxpayers. Our urgent task is to sort out these claims on our capacity while being cognizant of the changing world around us. We must then win support for a program of work that, when viewed in retrospect in the year 2000, will have been the most useful for the times.

During the next 6 months, we will try to sort out priorities—old and new—for the years immediately ahead. At the same time, we will work to strengthen ties with the other USDA agencies and to develop strategies for carrying out a program of objective, relevant research and analysis without infringing unduly on the legitimate responsibilities of those agencies. This can and will be done.

Over the years, ERS has been a good steward of the resources entrusted to it by the American public. As we approach the exciting times ahead, we still take that stewardship seriously.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John".

John Lee

state-of-the-art knowledge about consumer demand that can then be used to analyze the effects of commodity and food assistance programs. Earlier efforts focused on estimating systems of demand elasticities for 41 food groups and on estimating the effects of changing household demographics on food consumption with implications for the future.

The recently released *Retail-to-Farm Linkage for a Complete Demand System of Commodities* (TB-1775), by Michael Wohlgenant and Richard Haidacher, reports on conceptual advances in estimating marketing margins that are consistent with demand system elasticity estimates and variable factor proportions between farm and marketing inputs. The empirical results show dramatic changes in farm-level price elasticities compared with earlier studies.

Farm-Level Demand Elasticities for Agricultural Commodities (RB-988, Purdue University Agriculture Experiment Station), coauthored by Eldon Ball and Kuo Huang (CED) and Thomas Hertle and Marinos Tsigas (Purdue University), reports on farm-level elasticities developed using a computable general equilibrium model that integrates complete demand system elasticities developed in ERS by Ben Huang and Richard Haidacher, aggregate agricultural production technology research by Eldon Ball, and margin work by Michael Wohlgenant (North Carolina State University).

These two publications extend knowledge of price and margin behavior by building on research components developed within ERS as part of its long-range research support program. The work is now positioned to become an integral component of ERS's program and policy analysis.

During his year in ERS, Pascoe will work jointly with the Soil and



Carolyn Riley

Water and Resource Policy Branches of ERS's Resources and Technology Division as well as with the Commodity Economics Division. His

research will include a study of the effects of U.S. agricultural and environmental policies on land degradation. Hyberg will be conducting a similar study in Australia.

Pascoe's research interests include fisheries economics, irrigation and policy, and land use economics. He has a B.S. in natural resources and an M.S. in economics from the University of New England (Australia).

Miranowski Takes a Special Assignment

John Miranowski, Director of ERS's Resources and Technology Division, is now also a special assistant to deputy secretary Jack Parnell and coordinator of the Secretary's Policy Coordination Council.

Miranowski's responsibilities include coordinating a number of crosscutting issues related to agriculture, environment, and resource interactions, including water quality, food safety, pesticides, and global change, at the departmental level.

Personnel Notes

Webb Is Now a Senior Economist

Alan Webb has been appointed to a senior economist position in the Developed Market Economies Branch, Agriculture and Trade Analysis Division (ATAD). Webb has been with ATAD's Trade Policy



Carolyn Riley

Branch since 1979, where he analyzed issues related to U.S. agricultural policy, including the effects of changes in U.S. farm legislation on trade, the impact of embargoes on U.S. exports, trade liberalization alternatives, and changes in Pacific Rim agricultural trade.

Webb has recently supervised the update of the ERS estimates of producer and consumer subsidy equivalents and has helped design a microcomputer data base and software program called PS&D

VIEW for using USDA's supply-utilization tables. During 1986-88, Webb was stationed at the University of California (Davis) to do cooperative research on the effects of embargoes on U.S. exports and Pacific Rim trade issues. He was stationed in Paris, France, during 1982 with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development working on trade issues with developing countries.

Webb has a B.A. in international relations from American University, an M.A. in economics from the University of Arkansas, and a Ph.D. in agricultural economics from Oklahoma State University.

Australia's Pascoe to Spend a Year in ERS

Sean Pascoe, principal research officer, Resource Economics Branch, Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, is in ERS for a year as a part of the ERS-ABARE exchange program. ERS economist Bengt (Skip) Hyberg is currently at ABARE in Canberra.

ERS Alumni Notes

[We invite ERS alumni to write to us at the address on page 2 about what they or other alumni are doing, where they are living, etc.]

ERS retirees, alumni, and colleagues are invited to attend the dedication of the Frederick V. Waugh Memorial Auditorium in memory of USDA economist, Frederick V. Waugh. The brief ceremony and reception will be on Tuesday, March 13, at 2:30 p.m. in the ERS headquarters, 1301 New York Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20005-4788.

Highlights of Staff Activities

Agriculture and Rural Economy Division

Mary Ahearn presented "Cost Distribution and Efficiency of Corn Production" (coauthored with **Gerald Whittaker** and **Dargan Glaze**) at a meeting of the Committee on Determinants of Size and Structure in Agriculture (NC-181), in Albuquerque, N.M. • at a Beltwide Cotton Conference in Las Vegas, Nev., **Mir Ali** presented "Regional Differences in Fertilizer Use and Production Practices for Cotton Producers" (coauthored with **Glaze** and **Kenneth Mathews**); **Glaze** presented "Characteristics of High- and Low-Cost Cotton Producers in the U.S." (coauthored with **Mathews** and **Michael Salassi**); **Mathews** presented "Implicit Nutrient Prices and Economies of Size in Cotton Fertilizer Use"; and **Duane Hacklander** presented "Farm Financial Outlook" • **Calvin Beale** spoke on current rural trends at a seminar sponsored by the Washington Journalism Center, in Washington, D.C. • **Kenneth Deavers** presented "Public and Private Services in Rural United States: Trends and Issues" (coauthored by **Shirley Porterfield**, **Richard Reeder**, **Norman Reid**, and **Elliot Dubin** (U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations), at a meeting of the Rural Services Project of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in Paris, France • **Lowell Dyson** has been appointed to the Committee on Historical Research of the Virginia Governor's Military Staff • **Gregory Hanson** organized a meeting of the Committee on Financing Agriculture in a Changing Environment (NC-161), in St. Louis, Mo., and served as moderator of a session on GATT and Trade Issues; at the meeting, **David Banker** presented "Extent of Recordkeeping by U.S. Farmers and Ranchers" (coauthored with **James Johnson** and **Mitchell Morehart**) • **Robert Hoppe** spoke on "Poverty in Rural America:

Statistical Evidence" and **Peggy Ross** served as a facilitator for a working group meeting on policy needs at a Professional Agricultural Workers Conference at Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, Ala. • **Richard Long** spoke about the prospects for local labor market area research in the 1990's at a meeting on "Changing Structure of Local Labor Markets in Nonmetropolitan Areas: Causes, Consequences, and Policy Implications" (S-229), in Washington, D.C. • **Norman Reid** gave the keynote address, "Economic and Social Changes and the Future of Rural America," at a symposium sponsored by the Coalition for Rural West Virginians, in Charleston, W. Va. • **Reid** also spoke on economic and social factors affecting the future of the rural economy at a USDA Soil Conservation Service seminar in Washington, D.C. • at a Rural Economic Research Conference sponsored by the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, in Arlington, Va., **Reid** was conference moderator; **Molly Killian** presented "Regional Patterns in the Growth and Stability of Rural Economies" (coauthored with **David Sears** and **John Redman**); and **Thomas Rowley** presented "Prospects for State Involvement in Rural Economic Development Based on Patterns of Metro-Nonmetro Economic Growth" (coauthored with **Redman**) • at a Rice Technical Working Group meeting in Biloxi, Miss., **Michael Salassi** served as cochair of the Economics and Marketing Panel and presented "Regional Comparison of the Financial Structure of U.S. Rice Farms, 1984 and 1988" (coauthored with **Dargan Glaze**) and "Summary of Rice Production Practices from the 1988 Farm Costs and Returns Survey" • **Salassi** also briefed representatives of the Japan External Trade Organization on the production and marketing of rice in the United States, in Washington, D.C. • **Patrick Sullivan** presented an overview of ERS's rural development activities and FY 1990 cooperative research agreements at a meeting of the Southern Rural Development Center's board of directors at Mississippi State University, in Starkville, Miss. • and

at an Allied Social Science Associations meeting in Atlanta, Ga., **Paul Swaim** presented "Job Displacement and Labor Market Mobility" and "Job Displacement and Geographic Mobility" (co-authored with **Michael Podgursky**, University of Massachusetts).

Agriculture and Trade Analysis Division

Harry Baumes and **Steven Magiera** participated in an Agricultural Policy and Markets Subcommittee meeting at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in Paris, France • **Nancy Cochrane** presented two papers, "Agricultural Subsidies and Trade Barriers in Eastern Europe and the Welfare Effects of Their Removal" and "Reforming Agricultural Prices in Eastern Europe: Case of Poland," at an American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies meeting, in Chicago, Ill. • **Walter Gardiner** spoke on recent developments in the European Community and implications for feed markets at a Carolina Swine Nutrition Conference sponsored by the Carolina Feed Industry and North Carolina State University, in Raleigh, N.C. • **Gardiner** also participated in a Farm Foundation roundtable on EC-1992 in Phoenix, Ariz. • **Gardiner** and **William Coyle** lectured on European Community agriculture and Japan's agricultural policies at a conference sponsored by the American Graduate School of International Management, in Glendale, Ariz. • **Kenneth Gray** spoke on the role of information in markets at a meeting of a group of Soviet agricultural officials and publishers sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation, in Washington, D.C. • **David Kelch** spoke on ERS's initiatives regarding EC-1992 at a work group meeting of the EC-1992 task force, in Washington, D.C. • **Robert Koopman**, **William Kost**, **Steve Magiera**, **Edward Overton**, **David Peacock**, **Alan Webb**, **Shwu-Eng Webb**, and **Kelley White** participated in an International Agricultural Trade

See HIGHLIGHTS, p. 6

Research Consortium meeting, in Clearwater Beach, Fla. • **William Liefert, Yuri Markish, and Lester Myers** (CED) visited research institutes, farms, and processing plants in Moscow, Stavropol, and Krasnodar to study Soviet agribusinesses • **Liefert** also presented a seminar, "Soviet Comparative Disadvantage in Grain versus Machinery and Equipment," at the University of Maryland (College Park) • **Markish** also was interviewed by Voice of America radio on the state of Soviet agriculture and economic and agricultural reforms in the U.S.S.R. • and **Kelley White** met with a working group of the U.S.-U.S.S.R. Joint Committee in the Field of Agriculture to negotiate activities to be undertaken by both sides under the U.S.-U.S.S.R. exchange program, in Moscow, Soviet Union.

Commodity Economics Division

Robert Barry briefed congressional staffers on the sugar situation and policy issues • **Katherine Buckley** was interviewed by USDA-TV about the outlook for the 1989/90 U.S. citrus crop and prospects for higher fruit prices • **Terry Crawford** participated in an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development meeting on meat and dairy, in Paris, France • **Denis Dunham** spoke on the food price outlook at a supermarket industry media conference organized by the Food Marketing Institute, in Indianapolis, Ind. • **Richard Fallert** gave a seminar on the current status of bovine Somatotropin (bST) at Purdue University • **Lewrene Glaser** participated in a conference on Alternative Agriculture in the Northeast, in Albany, N.Y. • **Joseph Glauber** participated in a Congressional Research Service seminar on Federal crop insurance and crop insurance briefings for congressional staff and Department program managers in Washington, D.C. • **Shannon Hamm** was interviewed by USDA-TV on the outlook for vegetables in the 1990's and by Gannett News on what

vegetables are consumed by Americans, especially around the holidays • **Charles Handy** presented "Exporting Processed Food in A Global Market" (coauthored with **Walter Epps**) • **Epps** presented "Firm Size and Employment Creation in Food Processing Industries," at a Food Distribution Research Society meeting in Albuquerque, N.M. • **David Harvey** spoke on the outlook for U.S. aquaculture at a Pennsylvania Fish Farming Conference, in Reading, Pa. • **Linwood Hoffman** presented "Oats: Prospects for 1988/89," at a meeting of the American Oats Association, in Minneapolis, Minn. • **Hutchinson** moderated a panel, "Coverage and Quality Problems with Existing Data Resources for Freight Transportation," at a conference sponsored by the Transportation Research Forum and the National Academy of Sciences, in Washington, D.C. • **Doyle Johnson** was interviewed about the U.S. Christmas tree industry by Gannett News and WDAY radio of Fargo, N.D. • **Philip Kaufman** presented "Trends in Food Retailing Concentration: Implications for Economic Performance," at a Food Distribution Research Society meeting, in Albuquerque, N.M. • **Janet Livezey** spoke on the U.S. rice outlook and participated in the Rice Market Outlook and Economic-Rice Research Review conference, in Beaumont, Tex. • **Ronald Lord** participated in an NC-194 Committee (Organization and Performance of World Food Systems: Implications for U.S. Policies) meeting, in Columbus, Ohio • **Lord** also spoke on GATT and U.S. sugar policy at a California Beet Growers Association meeting, in Brawley, Calif. • **Myles Mielke** presented a seminar on Mexican trade liberalization at the Inter-American Development Bank • **Lester Myers** participated in the Columbia, S.C., Agricultural Outlook and Policy Conference • **Kenneth Nelson, Felix Spinelli**, and Robert Martin (visiting professor, Auburn University) reported on progress in beef and pork modeling activities at an S-172 Committee (Southeast Regional Livestock/Meat Marketing) meeting in Ft. Worth, Tex. • and **Sara Short** presented the U.S.

dairy situation and outlook at a Northeast Regional Dairy Outlook conference, in New York, N.Y.

Resources and Technology Division

Steve Crutchfield presented a seminar at the Environmental Protection Agency on agriculture's effect on water quality and discussed the economic implications of new water quality policies and legislation • **David Ervin, Stephan Frerichs**, and **Ian McCormick** spoke on ERS's resource policy research at a meeting sponsored by the Environmental and Energy Study Institute on commodity program planting flexibility proposals and potential environmental effects, in Washington, D.C. • **Ervin** also participated in a National Conservation Review Group meeting considering recommended changes in approved practices for the agricultural conservation, emergency conservation, forestry incentives, and water bank programs, in Washington, D.C. • **Ralph Heimlich** organized a workshop, "1990 Farm Bill and Southern Natural Resources," in Washington, D.C. for the Southern Natural Resource Economics Committee (SRRIG-10) • **Philip Szmedra** participated in a workshop on Alternatives in Pest Management sponsored by the University of Illinois, in Peoria, Ill. • at an Allied Social Science Associations meeting in Atlanta, Ga., **John Miranowski** presided over a session, "Interactions between Environmental and Agricultural Policies: Opportunities for Coordination and Limitations for Evaluation," and **James Hrubovcak** presented "Limitation in Evaluating Environmental and Agricultural Policy Coordination Benefits" (coauthored with **Michael LeBlanc** and **John Miranowski**) • and **Miranowski** was recently elected to the Board of Directors of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists.

Bob Robinson participated in a Statewide Agricultural Outlook and Policy Conference, in Columbia, S.C., an International Agricultural Trade Research Consortium meeting, in Clearwater Beach, Fla., the Farm Costs and Returns Survey training school, in Reno, Nev., and a Southern Agricultural Economics Association meeting in Little Rock, Ark.

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